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Where Responsible Secrecy Rests In Regard To CIA

The very nature of its operations and the purpose for which it exists demand a wide measure of responsible secrecy for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Once again CIA looms as the target of concerned lawmakers who think the hush-hush agency's business, which is a sensitive and therefore tightly guarded part of the nation's business, ought to be more closely supervised by Congress.

There are reports of behind the scenes maneuvering by Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark) and other members of his foreign relations committee for an investigation of CIA.

Undoubtedly there are aspects of this organization's operations which are difficult to ignore. It is logical to assume that they are bound to have some effect on foreign policy; CIA employs thousands in its far-flung network, is financed by millions of dollars coming from hidden appropriations tied to other departments. Normally, this kind of set-up would cry loudly for exposure and investigation.

But CIA and the way in which it serves is anything but normal, despite the fact that a goodly share of its work probably falls into the routine and the less than romantic.

These sporadic cries for investigation serve some purpose in reminding CIA that the agency and its administrators are not a law unto themselves and that they are answerable if not to the whole Congress at least to the President and the Executive branch. As things are, responsible secrecy rests there.

Under the conditions of today and in the circumstance of hostile trouble spots in both hemispheres an investigation of CIA, with resulting frictions between the White House and the Congress, would be ill-timed and ill-advised. In the parlance of the cloak-and-dagger boys, the probing would break CIA's cover when the nation's defense and security would appear to need it the most.